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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the Louisiana Board of Regents commissioned a task force on libraries to develop a plan for greater cooperation and resource sharing among the state's academic libraries. The mission was hampered by the sparsity of automated facilities and the failure to secure state funding for public library automation, but by 1992 the task force had reorganized as the Louisiana Academic Library Information Network Consortium (LALINC) and related alliances called Louisiana Online University Information System (LOUIS) and Louisiana Library Network (LLN). The governance, funding, staffing, telecommunications infrastructure, and technology implementation strategies of each organization are discussed. A list of LALINC members is appended. (BEW)

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The Louisiana Online University Information System and the Louisiana Library Network

by Ralph J. Boe

Presented at the annual conference of "Computers in Libraries" (11th, Arlington, VA, February 26th - March 1st, 1996).

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The Louisiana Online University Information System and The Louisiana Library Network

History

The Louisiana Board of Regents commissioned a Task Force on Libraries, consisting of academic librarians and chief academic officers to help revise its Master Plan for Higher Education in 1990. Dr. Carolyn Hargrave, then Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Louisiana State University, was appointed Chair of the Task Force. The Task Force was commissioned to develop a plan for greater cooperation and resource sharing among Louisiana academic libraries. This mission was severely handicapped by the fact that only six Louisiana academic libraries were automated (Louisiana State University, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Southern University, Southeastern Louisiana University, Louisiana State University Medical Center, and Tulane) and only four academic institutions (Louisiana State University, University of Southwestern Louisiana, University of New Orleans, and Tulane) had access to the Internet. To share resources more efficiently each library had to automate their holdings and be connected to each other by a common network.

Because Louisiana State University had a contract with NOTIS Corp. which allowed the University to automate additional libraries at no extra cost (if the software remained on the Louisiana State University mainframe) the LSU Division of Computing Services and the LSU Libraries offered their resources and expertise to the Task Force on Libraries to help meet their goals.

In 1991, the Task Force on Libraries tried to secure state funds to automate public academic libraries on the Louisiana State University mainframe but their efforts failed. The Task Force then reorganized in 1992 to become the Louisiana Academic Library Information Network Consortium (LALINC). Every public and private academic library was offered an

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opportunity to join the consortium. Appendix A contains a list of the current members of LALINC.

Equipped with a plan from the Task Force, LALINC wrote a grant and obtained funds in 1992 from the Louisiana Board of Regent's Louisiana Education Quality Support Fund (LEQSF) to automate five academic libraries utilizing the Louisiana State University NOTIS Library Management System. The funding of this proposal provided the resources necessary to create the Louisiana Online University Information System (LOUIS).

The successful implementation of LOUIS, combined with the leadership and vision of Dr. Carolyn Hargrave, enabled Louisiana State University to compete and secure a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to implement the Louisiana Library Network (LLN). In 1994, the Louisiana Public Service Commission understood the benefits related to these systems and established an educational tariff to defray installation and significantly reduce the monthly service costs of data circuits for educational institutions. This action has enhanced each library's ability to sustain LLN after the grant expires.

Governance

The bylaws of LALINC define its purpose, programs, activities, membership requirements, fees, voting privileges and governance structure. LALINC's elected officers consist of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and a Secretary/Treasurer. The LALINC officers and two at-large elected members comprise the LALINC Executive Committee. The members of LALINC meet twice a year to discuss issues related to academic libraries in Louisiana.

LOUIS is just one of the many initiatives explored and initiated by LALINC. LLN evolved from the success experience by the implementation of the first phase of LOUIS. The staff which is responsible for the design, development, daily operation and enhancements of

LOUIS and LLN is also called LOUIS. The LOUIS Office in located in Middleton Library on the LSU campus and reports to the Executive Director of the LSU Division of Computing Services. The LOUIS Office is one of five departments within the Division of Computing Services.

LOUIS and LLN have no bylaws; they are systems. The institutions which are part of LOUIS consist of those libraries which have been automated on the LSU mainframe utilizing the NOTIS Library Management System. Each LOUIS library has a systems administrator, who serves as a coordinator for each institution, to interface with LOUIS Office personnel. The system administrators meet with representatives from the LOUIS Office twice a year to discuss problems, issues and future plans. A Louisiana NOTIS Users Group Meeting is held once a year where staff members from any Louisiana library using the NOTIS Library Management System are invited to attend to discuss NOTIS related issues.

LLN participants consist of one public library in each parish and eighteen K-12 school libraries distributed around the state. The State Library of Louisiana, as well as each LLN participant, interfaces with LOUIS Office personnel to obtain support, direction and training. The State Library of Louisiana sponsors two meetings each year with the public library directors and the LOUIS staff has been invited to these meeting for the last two years to discuss the implementation of LLN and answer questions.

In 1995, Louisiana allocated $1,085,000 to the Louisiana Board of Regents to maintain and enhance LOUIS and LLN. This allocation stipulates that the Board of Regents will contract with LSU to operate and manage the systems. The directors of the LOUIS academic libraries and the director of the State Library of Louisiana will help develop the policies, procedures, and priorities for the long-term governance of LOUIS and LLN. Although each institution will participate in developing goals for LOUIS and LLN, Louisiana State University

is responsible for the management and operation of both systems.

Funding

The initial funding for LOUIS was obtained in 1992 from a Louisiana Board of Regent's LEQSF grant. A total of $844,816 was awarded to LSU to automate the Phase I academic libraries (Louisiana Tech University, University of New Orleans, Nicholls State University, Northeast State University and University of Southwestern Louisiana) on the LSU NOTIS Library Management System. The University of Southwestern Louisiana decided to stay on their existing system, Southeastern Louisiana University was anxious to discontinue the use of their NOTIS Library Management System for economical reasons, therefore Southeastern Louisiana University replaced the University of Southwestern Louisiana as a Phase I LOUIS institution.

An additional $108,000 was made available to LSU in 1992 through a Board of Regents PLEX matching funds grant. A gift of $44,000 from IBM was matched by the Board of Regents to help defray some of the LOUIS operation costs. LSU is looking for additional partners to secure the remaining $64,000 which is still available from the PLEX grant.

LSU was awarded a U.S. Department of Education Title II-D grant for $162,000 in 1992 to purchase hardware for the Phase II academic libraries (Northwestern State University, McNeese State University, Louisiana State University at Shreveport, Louisiana State University at Alexandria, and Delgado Community College) to make them "network ready."

Because of the success experienced in automating and linking the Phase I academic libraries of LOUIS, LSU decided to compete for a $2.48 millon grant from the U.S. Department of Education to provide Internet access to the public in each parish. LSU was awarded the grant in 1993 and used the funds to:

* Automate the Phase II academic libraries
* Purchase Internet workstations and pay data circuit fees for a year for one public library in each parish and eighteen K-12 school libraries
* Purchase hardware to make the Phase III academic libraries (Southern-Shreveport/Bossier, Southern University-New Orleans, and Louisiana State University at Eunice) "network ready"
* Purchase access to full-text journal databases for all LOUIS and LLN participants.

LSU was awarded two more LEQSF grants totaling $470,000 from the Louisiana Board of Regents in 1994 to automate the Phase III academic institutions and purchase access to engineering databases for the six Louisiana universities with engineering programs (Louisiana State University, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Louisiana Tech University, McNeese State University, Southern University, and the University of New Orleans).

In 1995, the Louisiana legislature funded LOUIS and LLN with a $1,085,000 allocation. This allocation was made to the Louisiana Board of Regents who will contract with LSU to operate and manage LOUIS and LLN.

Staffing

The LOUIS Office was created in January, 1993. A director, three librarians and two computer analysts were assigned the tasks of implementing the first LEQSF grant to create LOUIS. In 1994, a librarian, two computer analysts, and a telecommunication manager were added to the staff to create and implement LLN. Currently the staff consist of a director, four librarians, and four computer analysts.

The LOUIS Office is responsible for designing, supporting, and enhancing LOUIS and LLN. The director administers the budget and meets with the principal investigators of the

grants on a monthly basis to communicate accomplishments, seek guidance on priorities and develop future plans and goals for the systems.

Three discussion lists were established to facilitate communication between the LOUIS staff and LOUIS/LLN participants. LALINC-L was established for academic libraries, LLN-L was established for public libraries, and DVISTA-L was established for all customers of the Ameritech Library Services Vista product. These listserves, combined with e-mail services which are available at all Louisiana academic and public libraries, have contributed to developing the synergism which has developed among Louisiana libraries within the last two years.

Telecommunication Infrastructure

In 1992, the Louisiana State Office of Telecommunication Management (OTM) decided to establish a widearea, multi-protocol state network to serve the needs of state government and education. OTM established a partnership with academic institutions to design and build the Louisiana Network (LaNet). In 1993, Louisiana academic institutions received National Science Foundation grants to connect their institutions to the Internet. Instead of each institutions connecting to the Internet separately, they agreed to become LaNet members to support the development of LaNet and LOUIS. Six backbone sites and communication lines connecting them were installed and functional in March, 1993. This was the birth of LaNet.

As each academic institution became a LaNet node, they were given Internet access from one of three sites on LaNet. LOUIS was the application which served as a catalyst for academic institutions to become LaNet members. LLN utilizes the same network infrastructure. The success of LOUIS and LLN is directly related to the reliability of LaNet, and LOUIS and LLN provided LaNet with a significant number of members to ensure its

existence and financial stability.

LOUIS Implementation

The card catalogs for the LOUIS Phase I libraries were automated in October, 1993, the Phase II libraries were automated in October, 1994, and the Phase III libraries are scheduled to be automated by the fall of 1995. The LOUIS Office personnel help individual libraries identify data conversion needs and trains library personnel in the use of the NOTIS Library Management System online catalog, system configuration, cataloging, authority, OCLC export, and circulation functions. Two LOUIS libraries, in addition to LSU and the LSU Law Center, have implemented circulation and another four libraries are scheduled to implement circulation before the end of 1995. All LOUIS libraries still need to schedule the implementation of the acquisition and serials check-in functions which are available with the NOTIS Library Management System.

LLN Implementation

The LOUIS Office personnel developed the hardware and software configuration for LLN during the spring and summer of 1994. The configuration which is implemented in most public and school libraries include a digital service unit, a router and a 486 PC running Windows and TCP/IP with gopher and World Wide Web client software. This equipment is connected to a regional hub site (academic institutions which are LaNet members) to take advantage of the educational tariff which was implemented by the Public Service Commission. The Internet workstations were installed at the public libraries between September and December of 1994. The eighteen school library Internet workstations were installed in the spring of 1995.

Personnel from the LOUIS Office trained over three hundred public library staff members at eleven sites between November, 1994 and January, 1995. Another fifty school library staff members received training in March, 1995. The public and school library staff members were trained to search the LOUIS online catalogs, navigate the Internet using gopher and World Wide Web clients, and retrieve full-text journal articles from the UMI databases (Periodical Abstract Library and Research editions, ABI/Inform, and Newspaper Abstract) using the Ameritech Library Services Vista product.

Eight academic institutions now provide e-mail services for all Louisiana public libraries. The librarians at the academic libraries are also training public library staff members in the use of their e-mail systems.

Summary

The cooperation which has existed between private industry, state government, higher education, public libraries and K-12 schools to implement LOUIS and LLN has been phenomenal. Ten academic libraries have been automated, the State Library of Louisiana, sixty-four public libraries and eighteen school libraries have been connected to the Internet, and all of these academic, public and school libraries have been given access to full-text journals in just two years. Without the cooperation of all parties involved, the success of LOUIS and LLN would not have materialized.

A complete evaluation of LOUIS and LLN, including system availability, usage statistics, training results, and patron perceptions, will be completed by the LSU School of Library and Information Science faculty later this year.

Louisiana is now a leader in a dynamic new field that uses the latest technology to enhance both education and public access to information: library networking!

Appendix A
LALINC Members

Bossier Parish Community College
Delgado Community College
Dillard University
Grambling State University
Louisiana State University
Louisiana State University at Alexandria
Louisiana State University at Eunice
Louisiana State University at Shreveport
Louisiana State University Medical Center
Louisiana State University Veterinary Medicine
Louisiana State University Law Center
Loyola University
Louisiana Tech University
McNeese State University
Nicholls State University
Northeast Louisiana University
Northwestern State University
Nunez Community College
Our Lady of Holy Cross College
Southeastern Louisiana University
Southern University
Southern University Law Center
Southern University-Shreveport/Bossier
Southern University-New Orleans
Tulane University
University of New Orleans
University of Southwestern Louisiana
Xavier University
Centenary College

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